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Protecting American Interests Abroad: U.S. Citizens, Businesses, and Non-Governmental Organizations

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Statement of Bruce Hoffman,*
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Thank you Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on this important matter.

Nearly half a century ago the renowned British novelist and international traveler, Evelyn Waugh, presciently observed that, "In a few years' time the world will be divided into zones of insecurity which one can penetrate only at the risk of murder and tourist routes along which one will fly to chain hotels, hygienic, costly and second-rate."[1] Today, many Americans would likely agree with that assessment: simultaneously comforted by the monochromatic familiarity of restaurants and hotels that have become indistinguishable from one another whether located here or abroad; while increasingly leery of a world beyond our borders seen as populated by terrorists, kidnappers, brigands and bandits.

It is perhaps not surprising that such a world view of palpable threat and acute risk should exist given the seeming unrelenting litany of terrorist attacks, high-profile kidnappings, aircraft hijackings, extortions and robberies that have deliberately targeted or randomly entangled Americans either travelling or working abroad. To a large extent, this perception is grounded in an undeniable reality: for over three decades, terrorists have targeted the United

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[1]   Evelyn Waugh, "I See Nothing But Boredom . . . Everywhere (London, *Daily Mail*, 28 December 1959)," in Donat Gallagher (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order——A Selection From His Journalism* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), pp. 47-48.

States—and in turn its citizens—more often than any other country.[2] The report of the National Commission on Terrorism last year drew attention to precisely this lamentable situation: "Terrorists attack American targets more often than those of any other country."[3] Recent testimony before a Senate Committee respectively by the Director, Central Intelligence, George Tenet and a senior State Department official further attested to this fact: with both men agreeing that "The United States remains a number one target of international terrorism. As in previous years, close to one-third of all incidents worldwide in 2000 were directed against Americans."[4]

That the world is perhaps a more dangerous place today for Americans than ever before is further evidenced by the U.S. State Department's list of "Current Travel Warnings and Public Announcements." As of this past Sunday (1 April 2001), for instance, more than a quarter of the world's countries were —for one reason or another—deemed unsafe for Americans to visit.[5] While one would doubtless expect to find Indonesia, Burundi, Israel (and the West Bank and Gaza), Colombia, etc. on the list of countries that Americans are recommended to avoid; the presence of the United Kingdom, for example, on an ancillary list of somewhat less dangerous places—but ones nonetheless with "terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions that pose significant risks or disruptions to Americans"—was slightly more bewildering. Admittedly, the 15 March 2001 advisory pertaining to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in that country partially explains the UK's inclusion. But when one also consults the "public announcement" posted on 4 December 2000,

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[2] Followed by Israel, France, Great Britain, Germany, the former Soviet Union and Russia, Turkey, Cuba, Spain, and Iran. The RAND Chronology of International Terrorism cited in Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism Trends and Prospects," in Ian Lesser, et al., *Countering the New Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-989-1999), p. 35.

[3] Report from the National Commission on Terrorism, *Countering The Changing Treat Of International Terrorism* (Washington, DC, June 2000), p. iii.

[4] See Testimony of Thomas Fingar, Acting Assistant Secretary, Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, Statement before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on "Worldwide Threat 2001: National Security in a Changing World," *Congressional Quarterly Abstract* (electronic version), 7 February 2001; and, Statement by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Worldwide Threat 2001: National Security in a Changing World," 7 February 2001 at: http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/UNCLASWWT_02072001.html.

[5] See http://www.travel.state.gov/warnings_list.html accessed 1 April 2001.

which is still in force, a different picture presents itself of "numerous incidents of terrorism [in which] . . . some [Americans] have been injured when caught up in disturbances."[6] Those planning a holiday or embarking on a business trip might be forgiven for not knowing what to conclude from such messages: is it or is it not safe to travel to the United Kingdom? Am I at greater risk from terrorism by riding the London tube or from muggers while on the New York City subway? Is it more dangerous to visit the UK or to drive along one of American's highways to the nearest airport? The "Current Travel Warnings and Public Announcements" list of course makes no pretension whatsoever of being able to answer such questions, but at the same time it is difficult to disagree with the observation of these lists that was in Sunday's *Washington Post* travel section:

> The warnings can be useful, but many travelers and travel professionals think the department often overreacts. Its current warning on Lebanon underlines the dangers of potential violence, but no travelers have reported problems there in years. During a two-week trip last summer, this reporter wandered the streets of Beirut without mishap. Even the southern parts of the country, which the [State] department described as particularly risky, seemed safe enough.[7]

At the same time, moreover, in a country like the United States where student-perpetrated homicides in our schools have become tragically common, where national murder rates hover at around 16,000 deaths per year, and national violent crime figures annually exceed one million incidents,[8] the risks to United States citizens traveling and working abroad need to be put in an admittedly discomforting perspective of just how safe we are in fact living and working and going to school within our own borders. Another *Washington Post* article this past weekend (on Saturday's front-page), for example, called

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6   See http://www.travel.state.gov/warnings_list.html#u and
     http://www.travel.state.gov/warnings_list.uk.html, both accessed 1 April 2001.

7   Gary Lee, "Deciphering State Department Warnings," *Washington Post*, 1 April 2001, p. E7.

8   In 1999, a total of 15,533 persons were murdered in the U.S. (the 1998 figure was 16,973) among the 1,430,693 violent crimes that were recorded that year (1,533,887 in 1998). Source: Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation National Press Office, Washington, D.C., 18 December 2000.

attention to what is now sadly standard operating procedure in the metropolitan area's high schools: school safety drills "in which classrooms become protective bunkers . . . designed to show students, teachers and administrators how to survive should an intruder, or insider, suddenly appear with a weapon."[9] To put these two very different, equally tragic and heart-wrenching threats, in perspective: the 1999 Columbine, Colorado school shooting by two students killed 15 persons and wounded 23; that same year example (the most recent year for which published State Department statistics are available), according to the U.S. State Department's authoritative *Global Patterns of Terrorism*, a total of five Americans perished at the hands of terrorists and another 179 were injured as a result of some 169 terrorist attacks (a 52% increase from the previous year) directed against U.S. targets overseas. [10] It is perhaps worth noting that on average, 26 Americans have been killed per year by terrorists since 1968:[11] in 1999, the year of the Columbine massacre, this figure was just two persons fewer than the 28 students killed nationwide in America's schools.[12]

In drawing this distinction, I should emphasize that I am by no means suggesting that terrorism does not pose a genuine and dangerous threat to Americans traveling or working abroad and indeed that whatever the number of persons killed and injured overseas it is incontestably tragic that any American should lose his or her life to violence or be wantonly harmed and injured simply because of the nationality of the passport they carry, the uniform they wear, or the job they perform. Rather, it is simply meant to point out that in assessing the terrorist threat posed to American interests and citizens abroad—as in the assessment of all types of terrorist threats—one needs to do so soberly and analytically lest we overreact, fail to place terrorism in the context of the many other risks and threats that exist and thereby inadvertently succumb to the fear and intimidation that is precisely the

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9   Michael E. Ruane, "School Safety Drills' New Mantra: Duck and Cover," Washington Post, 31 March 2001, pp. A1 & A13.

10   Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1999* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State Publication 10687, April 2000), p. 1.

11   Total deduced from published U.S. Department of State.

12   Gregg Easterbrook, "Washington Diarist: Street Sign, *The New Republic*, 26 March 2001, p. 42.

terrorists' timeless stock and trade.[13] As noted last week in my testimony before this same Subcommittee, we then risk making hard policy and security choices and attendant budgetary allocations based possibly on misperception and misunderstanding rather than on hard analysis built on empirical evidence.

With that caveat in mind, let me now turn to the first of the three subjects that I have been requested to address: that of, the general security environment for non-official Americans overseas. I will then turn to examining briefly the types of threats against non-governmental organizations abroad; and, finally will offer some general recommendations for protecting non-official American interests abroad.

THE GENERAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT FOR NON-OFFICIAL AMERICANS OVERSEAS

Let me first point out that the above discussion of comparative threat assessment and relative risk analysis, drawing on cold statistics should not detract from the fact that the threat to Americans—including those travelling or living overseas in non-official capacities—is real, dangerous, and, I must note, arguably changing and growing in undesirable directions that could still more adversely affect U.S. citizens in the future. Whatever the figure, one point is incontrovertible: while the volume of worldwide terrorism fluctuates from year to year, and the number of U.S. citizens killed or wounded rises and declines depending on the overall level of worldwide activity and the violent dimensions of each particular terrorist incident that affects Americans, one enduring feature is that the United States remains the favored target of terrorists abroad. As previously noted, since 1968, the United States has annually headed the list of countries whose nationals and property are most frequently attacked by terrorists. This phenomenon is attributable as much to the geographical scope and diversity of America's overseas commercial interests and the number of our military bases on foreign soil as to the United States' stature as the lone remaining superpower. Terrorists are attracted to American interests and

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[13] See "Combating Terrorism: In Search of A National Strategy," Testimony of Dr. Bruce Hoffman before Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations of the Committee on Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, 27 March 2001.

citizens abroad precisely because of the plethora of readily available targets; the symbolic value inherent in any blow struck against perceived American "imperialism," "expansionism," or "economic exploitation"; and, not least, because of the unparalleled opportunities for exposure and publicity from the world's most extensive news media that any attack on an American target assures.

The reasons why the United States is so appealing a target to terrorists suggests no immediate reversal of this attraction. To a certain extent, as the French scholar, Gerard Chaliand has argued, it is a price that the West—and in particular the United States as leader of the free world—pays for its hegemony.[14] This has caused some analysts to argue that a less engaged U.S. foreign policy, exercising military restraint overseas and thereby eschewing the gamut of difficult and sometimes controversial missions involving peacekeeping and peace enforcement activities that in the past have invited attack, would have a salutary impact in reducing the incidence of terrorism directed against the U.S.[15] Whatever the logic of such proposals, however, even if such a policy of disengagement were desirable, much less, possible, it is by no means clear that the U.S. would be spared the opprobrium and violence that proponents of this option seek to nullify. Regardless of what the U.S. actually does, we are perhaps irrevocably perceived as a status quo power; a reactionary force upholding the prevailing order and thereby preserving our hegemonic dominance by tacitly inhibiting, if not actively suppressing, change.

Even those mostly parochial, local conflicts in places where the U.S. has traditionally had little if any active involvement generate a somewhat surprisingly vehement degree of fear and loathing. In Sri Lanka, for example, the leadership of the LTTE (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), a militant and violent Tamil separatist movement,[16] reportedly decries the U.S. as an irredeemably "imperialist" power, arguing "wherever there is a revolution,

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[14] Gerard Chaliand, "Preface' to Bruce Hoffman, *Le Mecanique terroriste* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1999), p. 9.

[15] See, for example, Ivan Eland, "Does U.S. Intervention Overseas Breed Terrorism? The Historical Record," *Foreign Policy Briefing, No. 50*, The CATO Institute (Washington, D.C.), 17 December 1998.

[16] That has been included on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organizations list since its inception in 1997 and is thereby proscribed from engaging in fundraising or any other political activities in the United States.

America puts its hand in to interfere and to support the [ruling] government."[17] In other parts of south Asia, similar views are voiced with the same stridency. Recently in an interview with the *New York Times*, for example, Professor Mafiz Muhammed Saeed, the leader and founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba ("Army of the Pure"), one of several pro-Pakistani, militantly Islamic organizations fighting for the liberation of Kashmir from Indian rule, criticized the U.S. "Who is America to judge us?" he said. "We don't trust America, and we certainly do not see it as a champion of justice."[18] Indeed, these same acute feelings of anger towards and resentment of the U.S. were cited by Senator Warren Rudman and General Charles Boyd of the National Security Strategies Commission in testimony before this Subcommittee last week as auguring for continued—and perhaps even heightened—anti-American violence in the future.[19]

However, the main problem that we face in this critical area of protecting American citizens and interests abroad from both current and future threats rubs up against one of the fundamental axioms of terrorism: hardening one set of targets often displaces the threat onto another "softer" target.[20] In other words, security measures may successfully thwart planned or actual terrorist operations or even deter terrorists from attacking: but they do not eliminate the threat entirely, which may mutate into other, perhaps even more deadly forms. Determined terrorists, accordingly, will simply identify another range of vulnerabilities and hence potential targets; perhaps in turn adjusting or modifying their means and method of attack and executing a completely different kind of operation that still achieves their goal. The pattern of terrorist targeting of commercial aviation over the past three decades illustrates this point:

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[17] Interview with a former high-ranking LTTE operative, Colombo, Sri Lanka, December 1997.

[18] Quoted in Barry Bearak, "Lahore Journal: A Jihad Leader Finds the U.S. Perplexingly Fickle," New York Times, 10 October 2000.

[19] See Prepared Statement of the Honorable Warren B. Rudman before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations of the Committee on Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, 27 March 2001. See also, The United States Commission On National Security/21st Century, *New World Coming: American Security In the 21st Century; Supporting Research and Analysis—Phase I Report on the Emerging Global Security Environment for the First Quarter of the 21st Century*, p. 48.

[20] My RAND colleague, Brian Michael Jenkins, perhaps the world's foremost expert on terrorism, was the first to articulate this axiom of terrorist modus.

During the late 1960s, for example, hijacking of passenger aircraft was among terrorists' favored tactics, accounting for 33 per cent of all incidents. However, as security at airports improved, as metal detectors and x-ray machines were installed at boarding areas, and as passenger profiling and other countermeasures were adopted, the incidence of airline hijackings declined appreciably to just seven per cent of all incidents in the 1970s and only four per cent in the 1980s. While these measures were successful in reducing airline hijackings, they did not stop terrorist attacks on commercial airlines altogether. Instead, prevented from smuggling weapons on board to hijack aircraft, terrorists merely continued to attack them by means of bombs hidden in carry-on or checked baggage.[21]

The 1988 in-flight bombing of Pan Am flight 103 being an especially notorious manifestation of this trend.

In the current context of heightened threats to U.S. diplomatic facilities and military forces overseas, as illustrated by such incidents as the 1996 bombing of the U.S. Air Force's Khobar Barracks in Saudi Arabia, the simultaneous bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania two years later, and last November's suicide attack on the *U.S.S. Cole* in Yemen, the implication is clear. As we harden the range of American diplomatic and military targets long favored by terrorists—hardening existing embassies and consulates world-wide and building stronger, less vulnerable structures in particularly dangerous foreign posts while increasing the force protection afforded to our military personnel deployed overseas—we doubtless will not eliminate the terrorist threat completely, but risk displacing it onto "softer," more vulnerable and more accessible, unofficial, non-governmental targets—e.g., ordinary American tourists and travelers, business people and otherwise unwary citizens. [22]

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[21] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorist Targeting: Tactics, Trends, and Potentialities," in Paul Wilkinson (ed.), *Technology and Terrorism* (London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1993), p. 21.

[22] In my book, I make precisely this same argument: "success for the terrorist is dependent on their ability to keep one step ahead not only of the authorities but also of counterterrorist technology. The terrorist group's fundamental organizational imperative to act also drives this persistent search for new ways to overcome or circumvent or defeat governmental security and countermeasures." See Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), p. 180.

The implications involving a potential increase in maritime terrorist attacks following the successful assault on the *Cole* are particularly chilling. For argument's sake, one might ask whether, as the defenses around and protective measures applied to U.S. warships increase in the aftermath of last November's devastating attack, does the threat posed by terrorism to a cruise ship heavily booked by American holiday-makers rise commensurately? It is horrifying to contemplate a *Cole*-type suicide attack on a Princess or Renaissance cruise ship (to cite randomly two of the popular lines) steaming into a Caribbean, Mediterranean or U.S. port much less any other unprotected harbor. How serious this threat is currently taken and what steps are being enacted are not entirely clear.

This general pattern of terrorists attacking a wide variety of "soft' American targets is, however, already well established. For example, as previously noted, according to the State Department's annual Global Patterns of Terrorism for 1999, a total of 184 Americans were killed or injured by terrorists that year. Of this sum, seven were U.S. Government employees working overseas, nine were diplomats, nine were members of the U.S. armed forces, 26 were ordinary American travelers, tourists, journalists or expatriates and 133—or nearly three quarters of all America casualties—were business people. Viewed from another perspective, some 86 percent of Americans killed or harmed by terrorists in 1999 (the last year for which published statistics are available from the State Department) were neither government employees, nor diplomats nor military personnel.[23] This distribution, though is by no means atypical for the last five years of the decade, stands in stark contrast to the previous year when a total of 23 American fatalities overseas were recorded, with diplomats (19) leading the list—but as a result of the two East Africa embassy bombings—followed by other U.S. citizens overseas (3) and business people (one). [24] In 1997, business people, however, again headed the list of American victims (104 persons), other non-government/non-military U.S. citizens were next (14), followed by government employees (four), diplomats (three) and military personnel (one). That year, 94 per cent of the casualties

[23]   Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism1999*, p. 106.

[24]   Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State Publication 10610, April 1999), p. 96.

were in the business people/ordinary citizens' categories.[25] In 1996, this per cent was nearly identical, with business people and ordinary citizens accounting for 92 per cent of the total;[26] and, in 1995 it was similarly at the 90 per cent mark.[27] *Clearly, then, a variety of American citizens traveling, living and working overseas—but who have no ostensible or official connection with the U.S. government—are indeed already firmly in the terrorists' cross-hairs.*

TYPES OF THREATS AGAINST NON-OFFICIAL AMERICAN CITIZENS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ABROAD

A total of 778 Americans have been killed by terrorists overseas between 1968 and 1999 (again, the last year for which published Department of State statistics are available). Of this number, half (391) were private citizens, 319 were U.S. military personnel, and 63 were American diplomats. More significant is the fact that 83 percent of Americans killed by terrorists between 1968 and 1999 died in attacks in which they were specifically targeted. By comparison, 14 per cent (106) perished as a result of simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time when a bomb went off, a rocket-propelled grenade was fired or shots rang out.[28]

In various other cases, however, individuals are targeted not necessarily because they are U.S. citizens, but because they are Westerners in general and hence opportunistically regarded by terrorists as desirable for their potential to bring large cash ransom payments from their employers and/or families. This appears to have been the case with the three Americans who were kidnapped—and subsequently murdered—by FARC guerrillas in northeastern Colombia in February 1999 (a fourth American, a helicopter technician employed by BP Amoco oil company was kidnapped by the ELN, the other principal left-wing Colombian guerrilla organization, and released in August

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[25] Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1997* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State Publication 10535, April 1998), p. 86.

[26] Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State Publication 10321, April 1997), p. 1

[27] Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State Publication 10610, April 1999), p. 73.

[28] In the case of 18 American victims the reason is impossible to determine. Total deduced from published U.S. Department of State.

1999).[29] Similarly, the three aid workers, who were helping the U'Wa Indians, are thought by State Department officials to have also been in the wrong place at the wrong time and hence to have represented a serendipitous target of opportunity to the guerrillas.   This was also the case with the two Americans who were among 14 foreigners kidnapped the following month by renegade Rwandan Hutus. All the victims were on a camping trip in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park to observe gorillas. The two Americans were among eight of the foreigners whom the rebels murdered.[30]

All 12 of the Americans who died in 1998, however, were either employees of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi or dependents; while seven of the 11 U.S. citizens wounded that year by terrorists sustained their injuries either at Nairobi (six) or Dar-es-Salaam (one). Interestingly, three-fifths of all the terrorist attacks directed against U.S. targets that year were bombings: with American businesses the foremost target.[31] This pattern of targeting U.S. commercial interests and business people was evident during 1997 as well when four Americans, employed by Union Texas Petroleum, and their Pakistani driver, were specifically targeted in an attack on the van in which they were riding to work in Karachi. That same year, the body of Frank Pescatore, a U.S. geologist kidnapped by FARC in December 1996 was discovered in another incident where opportunism seemed to have played as much a part his abduction as his nationality.[32] In 1997, seven other Americans were also abducted. Four were seized in Latin America—an engineer and gold miner kidnapped by FARC in two separate incidents (both were released unharmed), a geologist seized by Ecuadorian Indians, and a geologist abducted by the ELN (both men were also freed)—and three in Yemen —two American businessmen and a tourist who were all later freed unharmed.[33]

By contrast, the 24 U.S. citizens who were killed by terrorists overseas in 1996 reflected the varying ways in which Americans are both deliberately

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[29]   FBIS-LAT-2000-0810 "ELN Releases US Citizen Held for Year," Mexico City NOTIMEX, 31 August 2000

[30]   Idem.,*Patterns of Global Terrorism1999*, pp. 1, 6 & 25.

[31]   Ibid, p. 1.

[32]   Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998*, p. 1.

[33]   Bureau of Diplomatic Security, *Significant Incidents of Political Violence Against Americans, 1997* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State, 1998), p. 37.

targeted and killed or injured through sheer happenstance. For example, 19 of the fatalities were U.S. servicemen who died in the specific targeting of the U.S. Air Force Khobar barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. This figure, in fact, remains the highest number of US citizens killed in a single act of international terrorism since the 1988 in-flight bombing of Pan Am 103 (189 Americans perished in that incident).[34] However, the remaining five Americans who died that year were all killed in Israel. Each was unfortunate enough to have been riding a bus or standing in front of a shopping mall when a terrorist bomb exploded.[35]

1995 presented a similarly mixed picture of victimization by design or chance. Among the 12 U.S. citizens killed were two U.S. consulate employees who were deliberately gunned down by terrorists in Karachi; two missionaries who were executed by the FARC in Colombia; a tourist murdered by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; and two U.S. citizens killed in suicide bus bombings respectively in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.[36] The latter victim was 20 year old Alisa Flatow, whose father filed suit in Federal District Court in Washington, D.C. and who in March 1998 won a landmark $247.5 million judgment against the Government of Iran for supporting Palestine Islamic Jihad, the group that had claimed responsibility for the bus bombing.[37]

These basic patterns remain unchanged today. During the year 2000, for example, four American climbers were kidnapped by members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), who happened to come upon their encampment on a cliff face of Mount Zhioltaya Sten in Kyrgyzstan. They managed to escape captivity six days later, after killing a guard.[38] That same month, an American, Jeffrey Craig Schilling, was seized by the Abu Sayyaf organization, a radical Muslim group active in Mindanao in the Philippines. The organization had previously kidnapped two other U.S. citizens: a Protestant

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[34] Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1997*, p. 1.

[35] Ibid., pp. 1 & 18.

[36] Idem., *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996*, passim.

[37] David M. Herszenhorn, "Out of a Father's Grief, a Tool Against Terrorism," *New York Times*, 4 January 1999.

[38] See Michael Roberts, "Cliffhanger," and Greg Child, "Fear of Falling," *Outside Magazine*, November 2000 at http://www.outside.com; and, Pete Takeda, "Escape from Kyrgyzstan," *Climbing Magazine*, 15 December 2000, pp. 85-92.

missionary named Charles Walton in November 1993 and a Roman Catholic priest, Father Clarence Bertellsman the following July—both were eventually released unharmed.[39] An American was among 26 biologists seized by the ELN who were released in August;[40] and, FARC hijacked a helicopter in Ecuador in October and kidnapped six US citizens, two Frenchmen, a Chilean and an Argentine.[41] In November, an American, who headed a program of the US Republican Institute in Azerbaijan, a non-governmental organization, was found murdered in Baku, apparently the victim of a robbery;[42] and in January 2001 a U.S. citizen in Chechnya there as part of a humanitarian aid mission organized by Action Against Hunger was kidnapped.[43]

As the latter incidents evidence, threats to Americans working for international humanitarian relief organizations and similar non-governmental organizations, present a special problem. NGO workers are increasingly under threat for a number of reasons. As Randolph Martin, senior director for operations at the New York-based International Rescue Committee explains, this is a reflection of a combination of developments and circumstances:

- The overall increase over the past decade in the number and duration of conflicts to which aid workers are deployed;
- A general absence of rules of war or rules of conduct among the belligerents themselves, many of whom are irregular fighters and may also include criminals and bandits interested as much in plunder as in the realization of a particular political agenda;
- A prevailing perception of aid organizations as particularly "soft" targets that leads terrorists and other malefactors to conclude that

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[39] FBIS Transcribed Text, "Philippines: Abu Sayyaf Wants 4 Other States To Join in Talks To Free US National," FBIS-EAS-2000-0831, Manila Philippine Daily Inquirer, 31 August 2000.

[40] FBIS-LAT-2000-0812, "ELN Delivers Kidnapped Ecologists to Humanitarian Commission," Mexico City NOTIMEX, 12 August 2000.

[41] FBIS-LAT-2000-1012, "Ecuador Confirms Helicopter Hijacking, Kidnapping of Foreigners by FARC," Paris AFP, 12 October 2000.

[42] FBIS-SOV-2000-1130, "US NGO rep killed in Azeri capital," Baku Turan in Russian, 30 November 2000.

[43] FBIS-SOV-2001-0100, "US citizen abducted in Chechnya," Moscow ITAR_TASS in Russian, 10 January 2001.

such organizations and especially their employees can be "attacked with impunity"

- The erosion of the accepted neutrality of aid groups, who are seen by some belligerents as partisan, interventionist and generally an undesirable presence;
- A conspicuous lack of security among many NGO workers combined with a skeptical, if not averse attitude towards the need for security and other protective measures; and,
- The general rush to arrive on the scene of conflicts or humanitarian crises most needing help without adequate prior security preparation or thought. [44]

Martin's points dovetail with the views of another American citizen known to this author who works with a U.S.-based aid organization in a particularly conflict-plagued country in Africa. According to this person:

> The first threat we face is basic: threats against expatriates [by terrorists, guerrillas, paramilitaries and others] to gain publicity, or enhance panic and fear or to attempt to get aid agencies to withdraw. . . . The second threat is common banditry or theft that is common anywhere but enhanced in a country at war, facing severe economic difficulties . . . .The third threat that we face . . . is being caught in the cross fire- whether it be stray bullets hitting "expat" houses, rebel ambushes on the roads, hitting mines, or being caught in the field during a rebel attack. This third threat is often the most difficult to predict.

Based on the observations of this aid worker, the help provided by the local U.S. Embassy appears to be ingenuous, but limited. For example, when the security situation becomes especially tense or critical, the local U.S. embassy will sponsor a "Town Meeting" for all American citizens. These meetings review the current security situation in the country, and discuss responses—that is, mostly

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[44] Randolph Martin, "FMR 4 April 1999: NGO field Security," New York: International Rescue Committee, accessed at http://www.irc.org.

going over evacuation procedures, addressing the effects of curfews, etc. In especially volatile countries or at times of heightened danger, local American embassies will organize a warden system for U.S. citizens and green-card holders resident in that country. The U.S. embassy will contact "wardens" (American citizens who are chosen to represent certain zones of a city or other defined geographic areas) in the event of a security incident. The wardens then alert or pass on any embassy communications to persons in their zone.[45]

In general, the problem with NGOs therefore appears to be two-fold. On the one hand, the NGOs themselves arguably pay too little attention to security and in the past has provided insufficient training and pre-deployment. While on the other hand, it often falls to the local American embassy to fill this void, whose efforts and activities in this respect can be limited as much by insufficient resources and too few personnel.

CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-OFFICIAL AMERICAN INTERESTS ABROAD

It should be recognized that terrorism is not a problem that can be solved, much less ever completely eradicated. No country with the breadth and magnitude of the overseas interests and presence that the United States has can reasonably expect to hermetically insulate or seal itself off completely from any and every manifestation of this threat. In this respect, there are no broad, sweeping policies or new approaches in the form of overarching bureaucratic fixes or individual "magic bullets" that can hope to counter, much less, defeat a threat that is at once omnipresent and ceaseless. By the same token, we are neither powerless nor defenseless in the face of terrorism and there are a number of practical steps that might usefully be taken that might effectively mitigate the threat. These could include:

- Ensuring that our intelligence resources and capabilities—especially with respect to HUMINT (human intelligence sources)—are sufficiently funded, properly organized, and continually oriented to actively identifying and countering the range of threats confronting American citizens and interests overseas;

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[45] E-mail correspondence with an American working in Africa for a U.S.-based international humanitarian relief organization, 11 March 2001.

- Making certain that the security in and around the principal transportation nodes—both for air as well as maritime travel—most frequented by American tourists and business people overseas are of a uniform, high standard. In this respect, Federal Aviation Agency and Department of State inspection teams have repeatedly in the past identified lax security in airports throughout the world—particularly in some African, East Asian, and Latin American countries;
- Further educating and informing the headquarters and staffs of United States-based NGOs and international humanitarian relief organizations of the importance of security and the pre-deployment and proactive measures that can be adopted to enhance the safety of Americans working overseas for these organizations in conflict-ridden countries of the world; and,
- Perhaps seeking to achieve further consistency and clarity in the travel advisories and other warnings and public announcements emanating from official U.S. government sources.

Finally, the threat of terrorism itself needs to be kept in perspective. There is a thin line between prudence and panic. Accordingly, a prerequisite to ensuring that our formidable resources are focused where they can have the most effect is a sober and empirical understanding of the threat. Only in this manner can our efforts achieve the greatest likelihood of success and effectiveness.

Thank you for your time. I will be happy to respond to any questions that you might have.